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ABSTRACT

While parenting, attachment, individuation, and identity theories suggest relationships between parent-adolescent relationships, parenting behaviors, and adolescent self-evaluations, these theories differ in whether parent-adolescent relationship quality or parenting behaviors are more directly linked to adolescent self-evaluations. For this study, 970 students (seventh and tenth grades) completed supra-scales for parent-adolescent relationships, parenting, and self-evaluations. These sets of scales intercorrelated moderately to highly. Two mediation models according to attachment and individuation/identity theories were tested. Hierarchical regression analyses revealed that effects of the parent-adolescent relationships scales on adolescent self-evaluations were mediated by the scales of parenting behaviors. These results supported the individuation/identity hypothesis that parenting behaviors are more closely linked to adolescent self-evaluations and that they mediate the effects of parent-adolescent relationships. (Contains 27 references.) (Author)

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On Relative Effects of Parenting Behaviors and Parent-Adolescent Relationships on Adolescent Self-Evaluations

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While parenting, attachment, individuation, and identity theories suggest relationships between parent-adolescent relationships, parenting behaviors, and adolescent self-evaluations, these theories differ in whether parent-adolescent relationship quality or parenting behaviors are more directly linked to adolescent self-evaluations. 970 students (7th and 10th grades) filled-in four supra-scales each for parent-adolescent relationships, parenting, and self-evaluations. These three sets of scales intercorrelated moderately to highly. Two mediation models according to attachment and individuation/identity theories were tested. Hierarchical regression analyses revealed that effects of the parent-adolescent relationships scales on adolescent self-evaluations were mediated by the scales of parenting behaviors. These results supported the individuation/identity hypothesis that parenting behaviors are closer linked to adolescent self-evaluations and that they mediate the effects of parent-adolescent relationships.

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DARMSTADT
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On Relative Effects of Parenting and Parent-Adolescent Relationships on Adolescent Self-Evaluations

Poster paper presented at the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Society for Research on Identity Formation (SRIF), New Orleans, LA, April 11, 2002

1 Problem

1.1 We know...

Parent-adolescent relationships are linked to adolescents' self-evaluations. I suggest two main dimensions of Relationship Development Status, *responsibility of adolescent*, and *trust*. Unlike some definitions of autonomy, "responsibility" not only means meeting own decisions but also that they are functional. Responsibility even implies to take others' opinions into account. *Responsibility* has been found to be related to positive self-esteem and freedom of depression as a severe type of self-devaluation (Noom, Deković, & Meeus, 1999) while simply claiming independence was related to higher levels of depression and inconsistently related to self-esteem (Beyers & Goossens, 1999; Noack & Puschner, 1999). In this study, a measure of simply claiming independence (separation from parents) will be used. *Trust* to parents has at least two facets. First, connectedness, affection, cohesion, etc. are related to self-esteem and low depression levels (Barber & Buehler, 1996; Roberts & Bengtson, 1993; Noom et al., 1999). Second, parental monitoring that in fact is a measure of trustful openness (Stattin & Kerr, 2000) is related to low depression levels (Barber, 1996; Barber & Olsen, 1997). Both types of trust will be investigated here.

Parental Behaviors are linked to adolescents' self-evaluations. Authoritative parenting has often been found to be related to healthy development (Steinberg, 2001). Its components are *acceptance*, *firm/consistent behavior regulation*, and *granting of psychological autonomy*. E.g., acceptance (Barber & Olsen, 1997), sensitivity, predictability, and school involvement (Juang & Silbereisen, 1999), and low levels of psychological control (Barber, 1996; Barber & Olsen, 1997) predicted freedom of depression. The three aspects of authoritative parenting will be investigated.

1.2 We don't know...

What are the relative effects of relationships and parenting? Does one mediate the effects of the other? On the one hand, according to attachment theory, first there are experiences with attachment figures (→ *parenting behaviors*). The individual (re-)constructs an "inner working model" of *relationships*. It contains not only expectations towards others but also self-evaluations (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Thus, parenting should affect self-evaluations, mediated by relationship representations. On the other hand, the individuation approach assumes that the parent-adolescent relationship is expressed and negotiated in everyday interactions (Hofer, Youniss, & Noack, 1998), e.g., in parental communication behaviors which are related to identity issues (e.g., Cooper, Grotevant, & Condon, 1983). Also identity theory (Roberts & Bengtson, 1993) assumes that feedback from significant others as expressed in parental behaviors is directly linked to self-evaluations. Both alternative mediation models will be tested.

2 Methods

Darmstadt Student Survey: $N = 968$ students attending 7th and 10th grades in a West German industrial city. Schools were selected to represent the different school tracks and thus to avoid the usual bias towards well-educated middle-class families. Ss completed written questionnaires within two consecutive class periods, often extended into the break. This study was part of the Cross-National Adolescent Project (C-NAP; Barber, 2001).

2.1 Parent-Adolescent Relationship Factors

Connectedness with Mother

- Adolescent Specific Connectedness (Masche & Barber, 2001; Masche & Senz, 2001): e.g., "Every now and then I like to make her happy", 9 items, $\alpha = .82$
- Relationship Satisfaction Scale (Masche, 1999, 2000, extracted from FAM III, Kreppner & Spiel, 1992; Skinner, Steinhauer, & Santa-Barbara, 1983): e.g., "She is always there for me if I want to talk to her", 15 items, $\alpha = .87$
- Emotional Helps By Mothers (Masche & Barber, 2001; Masche & Senz, 2001; basic idea in Projektgruppe Bildungsmoratorium, 1994): e.g., "Give encouragement in difficult situations", 5 items, $\alpha = .86$
- Emotional Helps For Mothers: the same 5 items, $\alpha = .83$

Connectedness with Father

- Adolescent Specific Connectedness ($\alpha = .85$)
- Relationship Satisfaction Scale ($\alpha = .90$)
- Emotional Helps By Fathers ($\alpha = .89$)
- Emotional Helps For Fathers ($\alpha = .87$)

Separation from Parents

- Decisional Autonomy Towards Mother (Masche & Barber, 2001; Masche & Senz, 2001): e. g., "It is my concern and not hers on what I spend my money", 10 items, $\alpha = .78$
- Decisional Autonomy Towards Father, $\alpha = .79$

Parental Monitoring

- Monitoring by Mother (e.g., Brown, Mounts, Lamborn, & Steinberg, 1993): e. g., "How much does your mother REALLY know ... What you do with your free time?", 5 items, α = .79
- Monitoring by Father, α = .83

2.2 Parenting Behaviors

Parental Autonomy Inferring Behavior

- Inconsistent Control: e.g., "My mother / female adult attachment figure is a person ... who lets me do something one day and the next day I get into trouble for doing the same thing", 3+3 items, α = .80
- Maternal Psychological Control (Psychological Control Scale–Youth Self-Report, PCS-YSR; Barber, 1996): e.g., "...who is less friendly with me, if I do not see things her/his way", 8 items, α = .74
- Paternal Psychological Control (PCS-YSR; α = .77)

Paternal Positive Parenting

- Paternal Acceptance (Schaefer, 1965): e.g., "...who believes in showing her/his love for me", 10 items, α = .89
- Paternal Psychological Autonomy: e.g., "...who respects the way I feel and think about things", 8 items, α = .78
- Paternal Psychological Control (PCS-YSR, reverse coded)

Maternal Valuing

- Maternal Acceptance (Schaefer, 1965; α = .88)
- Maternal Psychological Autonomy (α = .76)

Parental Laisser-Faire Behavior (scale that did not load highly on the three factors described above): e.g., "...who lets me go out any evening I want", 3+3 items, α = .83

2.3 Self-evaluation / Well-being

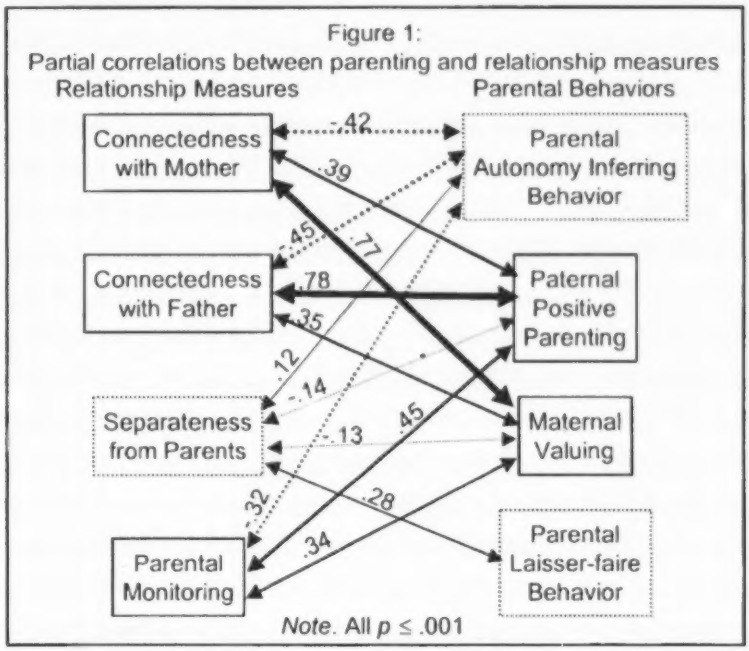
- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965): e.g., "I take a positive attitude toward myself", 10 items, α = .85
- Children's Depression Inventory (CDI; Kovacs, 1992): e.g., "I hate myself/I do not like myself/I like myself", 10 items, α = .78
- Depression (CBCL; adapted from Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1987): e.g., "I am unhappy, sad, or depressed", 5 items, α = .77
- UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980): e.g., "I feel left out", 4 items, α = .79

3 Results

If the effect of a variable A on a dependent variable C is mediated by a third variable B, then

- A and B must be correlated
- both A and B must predict C
- if A and B are entered simultaneously into regression equations as predictors, B must be still a predictor but A must loose its predictive power.

So, first *Figure 1* proves that parenting behaviors and parent-adolescent relationship measures were closely correlated.

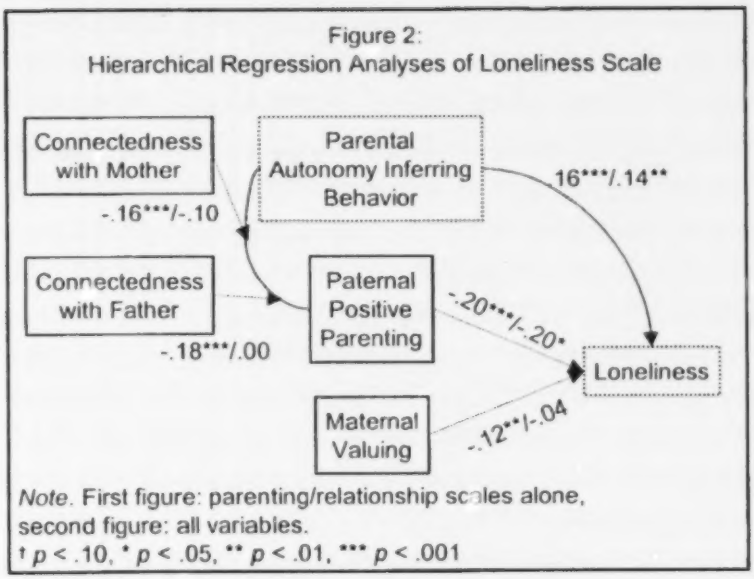


Next, for each dependent variable, two hierarchical regression analyses were computed. In Step 1, sex, grade, and school track were entered as controls. In Step 2, (a) parenting variables or (b) relationship measures were entered into the equations. In Step 3, the remaining (a) relationship measures or (b) parenting variables were entered. Thus, it could be checked whether parenting behaviors and/or relationship properties predicted the dependent variables, and mediations could be confirmed.

All analyses revealed that effects of relationship measures were mediated by parenting behaviors.

Figure 2: Connectedness with both parents predicted lower levels of loneliness. But this effect lost significance when parenting behaviors came into play: The relationship effects were mediated by paternal positive parenting and low levels of parental autonomy inferring behavior.

Figure 3: Depression was predicted the same way as loneliness: The more connected the adolescents were with both parents, the lower was the level of depression. This effect was mediated by levels of paternal positive parenting and of parental autonomy inferring behavior. In addition, parental monitoring predicted lower depression, in part also mediated by parenting behaviors.



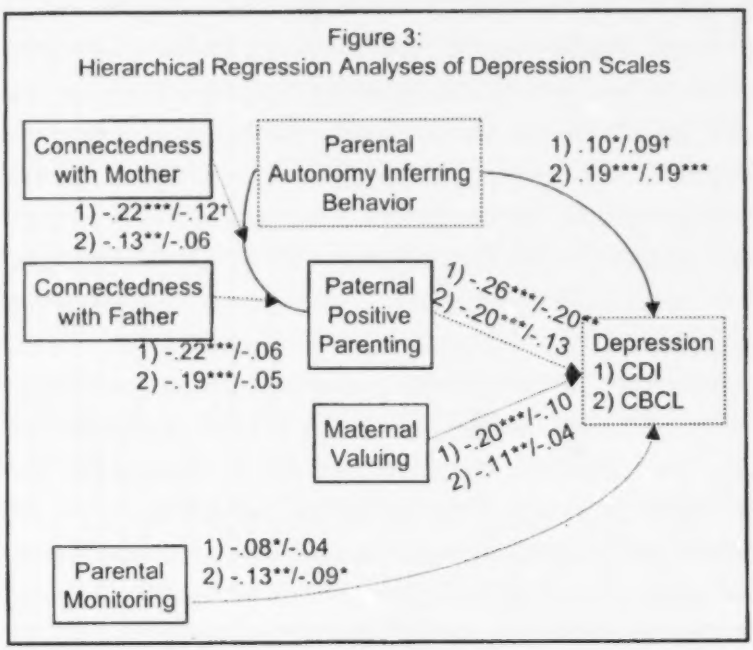
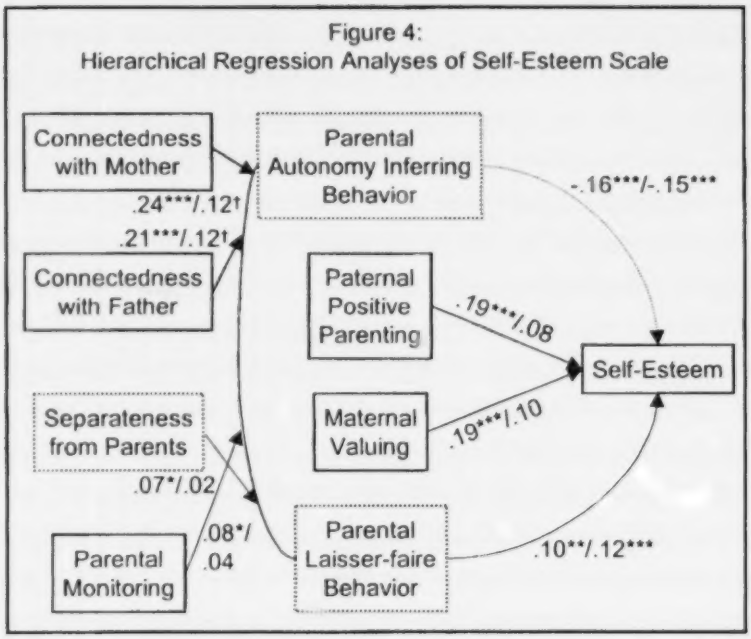


Figure 4: Self-esteem also was predicted by claims of autonomy (separateness from parents). All relationship effects were mediated by low levels of parental autonomy inferring and laisser-faire behaviors.



4 Conclusion

Different aspects of adolescent self-evaluations were predicted by the parent-adolescent relationship, most importantly by the connectedness to both parents. Contrary to attachment theory, no internal working model with its evaluations of self and others seem to play a role. Instead, in the sense of a "looking-glass self", adolescents reacted to the signals they received from their parents as significant others. Parental valuation of adolescents' ideas and feelings and obligation to set coherent behavior standards mediated the effects of connectedness with parents on adolescents' self-concept.

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